

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims in this application as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A needle-guide device, ~~particularly for a medical ultrasound probes, or the like,~~ comprising a base body having means for connection to the probe and ~~at least one~~an elongated guide hole for receiving a needle~~an elongated, rodlike diagnostic or surgical tool~~, characterized in that said needle-guide device is made of at least two removably connectable parts, which are shaped in such a manner that each of them forms complementary and substantially symmetrical parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole for a needle, which peripheral wall parts complete each other when said ~~two~~complementary and substantially symmetrical parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming and maintaining said elongated guide hole for accurately guiding the needle with a 360 degree covering delimiting wall over substantially the entire length of said guide hole.

2. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have mutual abutment surfaces which are tangent or secant to the elongated guide hole for guiding the needle, whereas said elongated guide hole is obtained by a combination of grooves which are formed either integrally on one of the mutual abutment surfaces of one of the two parts of the needle-guide device or partly on one and partly on the other of the two abutment surfaces of both parts of the needle-guide device.

3. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the separation plane between the two parts of the needle-guide device is parallel to the axis of the elongated guide hole and secant or substantially tangent to the hole.

4. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said elongated guide hole has a section which corresponds to the outer section of the needle, with the wall of the elongated guide hole adhering to the whole needle surface.

5. (Currently Amended) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said elongated guide hole has polygonal sections, ~~particularly square or rectangular sections, said square or rectangular sections~~ having such a size as to be able to inscribe therein the cylindrical or elliptical or oval section of the needle and generating needle-guiding surfaces tangent to the outer surface of the needle.

6. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the needle-guide device is composed of at least two removable parts, at least one base part and at least one second part, which two parts are separated from each other by a separation surface whose cross section is a broken rectangular curve, and forms a succession of alternate and parallel complementary engageable ribs, there being provided, in the opposite mutual abutment surfaces of the ribs of one or both of the two parts of the needle-guide device grooves having such a size and shape as to form together said elongated guide hole.

7. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 6, characterized in that the broken rectangular line-shaped separation surface between said two parts of the needle-guide has constant or variable widths to generate guiding holes aligned on one or more planes and with different relative positions.

8. (Currently Amended) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the needle-guide device may be divided in such a manner as to consist of more than two parts, ~~for instance three parts~~, shaped in such a manner as to form complementary parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole.

9. (Currently Amended) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~it is composed of a said base body for connection to an ultrasound probe, which has an~~ abutment or support surface for the second part of the needle-guide device, which second part has in turn at least one longitudinal groove whose size corresponds to the needle size, and forms the side walls and a wall transverse thereto for delimiting the needle-guiding hole, whereas its support surface on the base of the needle-guide device forms the missing wall of the elongated guide hole, when the two parts of the needle-guide device are connected.

10. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that the two mutual abutment surfaces of the two parts of the needle-guide device have each a groove whose width corresponds to the width of the needle and a partial depth relative to the corresponding dimension of the needle, the two grooves being coincident and completing mutually when the two parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming the elongated guide hole for guiding the needle.

11. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 6, characterized in that the base part of the needle-guide device has at least a longitudinal groove in the surface abutting against the second removable part of the needle-guide device, for

engagement of longitudinally continuous or discontinuous extensions of the side walls of a longitudinal groove formed in said second removable part of the needle-guide device, thereby forming the bottom of the longitudinal groove of the base, the missing completing wall of the elongated guide hole, whose additional delimiting walls are formed by the bottom of the longitudinal groove in said second part of the needle-guide device, the side walls of said groove and the extensions of said side walls of the groove in said second part of the needle-guide device.

12. (Currently Amended) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 11, characterized in that, ~~alternatively, instead of two extensions of the side walls of the longitudinal grooves in the second part of the needle-guide device, the said~~ second part of the needle-guide device ~~has~~ may be arranged to have a single extension of one of ~~said~~ the two side walls of the longitudinal groove, a second ~~whereas the other~~ extension ~~being~~ may be provided on ~~said~~ the base part, as an extension of the opposite side wall of the longitudinal groove in the base part of the needle-guide device, whereby each of the two parts of the needle-guide device forms two of the opposite walls of the elongated guide hole.

13. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 11, characterized in that the arrangement of the extensions of the side walls of the grooves in the two parts of the needle-guide device is alternate and complementary over the length of the two extensions in the longitudinal direction of the grooves, either on one side and along the two opposite sides.

14. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that it has means for centering and partially interlocking the two parts of the needle-guide device.

15. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have removable mutually locking means.

16. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 15, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have mutually clamping screw threaded means.

17. (Previously Presented) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 16, characterized in that the mutually clamping screw threaded means of the two parts of the needle-guide device have means for engaging said two parts of the needle-guide device in an non-

separable condition, and in a incompletely clamped condition.

18. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device, particularly for ultrasound probes, or the like, comprising a base body having means for connection to the probe and at least one elongated guide hole for receiving a needle-like surgical tool, characterized in that it has a plurality of elongated guide holes for guiding a plurality of surgical tools arranged with their axes coincident with a single plane or having axes arranged on more than one plane, particularly having hole axes arranged at the vertices of ~~ideal polygonal elements, such as triangles, quadrilaterals, or the like, or in any other different mutual arrangement.~~

19. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 18, comprising a base body having means for connection to the probe and at least one elongated guide hole for an elongated, rodlike diagnostic or surgical tool, characterized in that said needle-guide device is made of at least two removably connectable parts, which are shaped in such a manner that each of them forms complementary parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole for a needle, which peripheral wall parts complete each other when said two parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming said elongated guide hole for guiding the needle with a 360 degree covering delimiting wall.

20. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 18, characterized in that said needle-guide device is comprised of a base part to be secured, for instance, to an ultrasound probe and of a removable part, a separation plane or surface being provided between the at least two parts, which is parallel to the axis of the corresponding elongated guide hole, and is secant or at least tangent to the corresponding hole, and combinations of grooves and walls in the mutual abutment surfaces of said two parts which, by their mutual engagement, form the complementary parts of the surfaces delimiting the two, three or more holes of the needle-guide device, so that, by separating said at least two parts, all the elongated guide holes are longitudinally open on at least one portion of a side.

21. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 18, characterized in that it includes three elongated guide holes and wherein the needle-guide device is divided into a base and a second part to be removably fastened to the base, the base of the needle-guide device having a surface whereby it abuts against the second part of the needle-guide device, wherein a first groove is provided in a median position, in turn having a second groove in its bottom wall, which is designed to form two longitudinal side walls and a longitudinal bottom wall of one of

the elongated guide holes for one of the needles, whereas the second part of the needle-guide device has, on the surface turned toward the abutment surface of the base part, a longitudinal median rib which coincides with the longitudinal median groove in the base part and forms the missing delimiting surface of the corresponding elongated guide hole, thereby completing the delimiting surfaces formed by the second groove, whereas, in the surfaces of the second part of the needle-guide device, on the two sides of the longitudinal median rib, longitudinal grooves are provided which form, with the bands of the abutment surface of the base on both sides of the first groove, the delimiting surfaces of the two additional elongated guide holes.

22. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 21, characterized in that the grooves which form a portion of the side walls and a wall transverse thereto for delimiting the elongated guide hole are provided partially in both opposite mutual abutment surfaces of the two parts of the needle-guide device.

23. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 21, characterized in that the needle-guide device has a slender or tapering front head, particularly having rounded edges, especially being wedge-shaped.

24. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 18, characterized in that the whole needle-guide device has a shape tapering toward the front end, especially a wedge shape.

25. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 24, characterized in that at least one elongated guide hole for guiding at least one needle is inclined in a manner corresponding to the wedge-shaped profile of the needle-guide device.

26. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 23, characterized in that said front head is also perforated and is arranged to be a single piece, and preferably made of one piece with the base part of the needle-guide device.

27. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 23, characterized in that the front head, which is integral with said base and the second part of the needle-guide device have complementary mutually engaging means.

28. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 23, characterized in that the through hole in said head part is widened on at least one side or for a portion of its delimiting surface inside the head, the second part of the needle-guide device having a wall extension at its end which may be axially engaged in the through hole of the front head, and which is coincident

with said widened portion and complementary thereto so as to form and/or complete the delimiting wall of the through elongated guide hole, at least on a few sides, even at the front head of the needle-guide device.

29. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide as claimed in claim 28, characterized in that the second part of the needle-guide device has said extensions on two opposite sides and in the form of front extension wings of the two side walls of the groove provided in said second part of the needle-guide device, whereas the front head of the needle-guide device has complementary widened portions in the corresponding walls of the through hole.

30. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 23, characterized in that an extension wing is also provided from the bottom wall of the groove of the second part of the needle-guide device, the front head of the needle-guide device being arranged to be accordingly widened even at said extension wing of the bottom side of the groove of the second part of the needle-guide device.

31. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 23, characterized in that the extension wings of the side and/or bottom walls of the groove in the second part of the needle-guide device are thinner than the wall of the second part of the needle-guide device and than the head of the needle-guide device, whereby an abutment step is formed between the front end of the second part of the needle-guide device and the facing rear end side of the front head.

32. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 26, characterized in that the front head of the needle-guide device, which is integral with the base part of the needle-guide device, has a through aperture which communicates with the elongated guide hole provided therein at at least one of the sides of said head, preferably at one of the two transverse sides, not coinciding with the extension wings of the second part of the needle-guide device and particularly at the side of the base part of the needle-guide device which is opposite the second part of the needle-guide device and meant to adhere against or turned toward the probe, whereas in the front head, the needle is only substantially guided on three sides and through less than 360° at least in coincidence with the through aperture.

33. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 32, characterized in that the front head has a steeper tapering inclination in the portion projecting beyond the aperture on one of the sides, and that the needle projection aperture is provided in the inclined front side, and is slot-shaped due to the inclination of the front end of the head.

34. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 23, characterized in that the length of the front head wherein each needle is guided only on a few sides is relatively small as compared with the length of the rest of the needle-guide device in which the elongated guide hole has a continuous delimiting surface.

35. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 34, characterized in that the front head has needle guiding surfaces covering less than 360° and wherein the missing part of the guiding wall is alternated in different positions through successive sectors of the head.

36. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 33, characterized in that, at the more tapered front end, the elongated guide hole delimiting walls are continuous and made of one piece, as well as directly accessible from the aperture wherfrom a needle projects.

37. (Currently Amended) A combination of a needle-guide device having a base and an ultrasound probe comprising a body and a scan head, characterized in that the base of the needle-guide device is removably attachable to the probe body in a stable and predetermined position, said base having one or more shape mating extensions which corresponds ~~adhere~~ to a portion of the outer surface of the ultrasound probe body to form ~~and/or~~ mutual interlock engagement means, ~~as well as clamping means~~.

38. (Currently Amended) A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the needle-guide device is made of a plurality ~~of at least two~~ removably connectable parts, which are shaped in such a manner that each of them forms complementary parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole for a needle, which peripheral wall parts complete each other when said plurality ~~of two~~ parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming said elongated guide hole for guiding the needle with a 360 degree covering delimiting wall.

39. (Previously Presented) A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the needle-guide device has a tapered front head and the probe is an endocavitory probe, which typically has a substantially cylindrical or other similar shape, also being elongated and having a rounded head, the base of the needle-guide device having a surface whereby it rests on the probe body only in a few partial portions of the longitudinal extension and particularly in the end portions of the base of the needle-guide device.

40. (Previously Presented) A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the facing surfaces of the base of the needle-guide device and of the probe body have

complementary centering projections and recesses arranged over their length.

41. (Previously Presented) A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the probe body may have recesses for accommodating supporting feet or extensions of the base of the needle-guide device, provided at least at the ends thereof.

42. (Previously Presented) A combination as claimed in claim 41, characterized in that the tapered front head of the needle-guide device has an engagement extension on the side turned toward the probe case, which is designed to engage in a recess of the probe body, in such a manner that the tapered end of said front head is connected thereto without substantially forming steps or discontinuities external the surface of the probe body.

43. (Previously Presented) A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the engagement means between the front head of the needle-guide device and the probe form means for holding the needle-guide device base in position, whereas the needle-guide device is removably secured to the probe by means of a clamping collar provided at the rear end portion of the needle-guide device.

44. (Previously Presented) A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that it includes an external ultrasound probe having a bulged shape and a wider head as compared with the handgrip, wherein the probe head has its greatest circumference in an intermediate position between the front end and the portion connected to the handgrip, whereas the needle-guide device has a base having two preferably symmetrically coincident extensions before the greatest circumference of the probe head, and an extension with a fastening screw which overlaps a rear side of the widened head against which the fastening screw is tightened.

45. (Previously Presented) A combination as claimed in claim 37, having at least one elongated guide hole arranged to have such an inclination with respect to the central axis of the cone of view of said ultrasound probe such that at least one needle passing through said guide hole falls within the probe imaging region upon scanning, and whereas any other needles passing through guide holes have predetermined and fixed positions relative to the said at least one needle.

46. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have mutual abutment surfaces which are tangent or secant to the elongated guide hole for guiding the needle, whereas said elongated guide hole is

obtained by a combination of grooves which are formed either integrally on one of the mutual abutment surfaces of one of the two parts of the needle-guide device or partly on one and partly on the other of the two abutment surfaces of both parts of the needle-guide device.

47. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that the separation plane between the two parts of the needle-guide device is parallel to the axis of the elongated guide hole and secant or substantially tangent to the hole.

48. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that said elongated guide hole has a section which corresponds to the outer section of the needle, with the wall of the elongated guide hole adhering to the whole needle surface.

49. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that said elongated guide hole has polygonal sections, particularly square or rectangular sections, said square or rectangular sections having such a size as to be able to inscribe therein the cylindrical or elliptical or oval section of the needle and generating needle-guiding surfaces tangent to the outer surface of the needle.

50. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that the needle-guide device is composed of at least two removable parts, at least one base part and at least one second part, which two parts are separated from each other by a separation surface whose cross section is a broken rectangular curve, and forms a succession of alternate and parallel complementary engageable ribs, there being provided, in the opposite mutual abutment surfaces of the ribs of one or both of the two parts of the needle-guide device grooves having such a size and shape as to form together said elongated guide hole.

51. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 50, characterized in that the broken rectangular line-shaped separation surface between said two parts of the needle-guide has constant or variable widths to generate guiding holes aligned on one or more planes and with different relative positions.

52. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that the needle-guide device may be divided in such a manner as to consist of more than two parts, for instance three parts, shaped in such a manner as to form complementary parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole.

53. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that it is composed of a base for connection to an ultrasound probe, which has an abutment or support

surface for the second part of the needle-guide device, which second part has in turn at least one longitudinal groove whose size corresponds to the needle size, and forms the side walls and a wall transverse thereto for delimiting the needle-guiding hole, whereas its support surface on the base of the needle-guide device forms the missing wall of the elongated guide hole, when the two parts of the needle-guide device are connected.

54. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 46, characterized in that the two mutual abutment surfaces of the two parts of the needle-guide device have each a groove whose width corresponds to the width of the needle and a partial depth relative to the corresponding dimension of the needle, the two grooves being coincident and completing mutually when the two parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming the elongated guide hole for guiding the needle.

55. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 50, characterized in that the base part of the needle-guide device has at least a longitudinal groove in the surface abutting against the second removable part of the needle-guide device, for engagement of longitudinally continuous or discontinuous extensions of the side walls of a longitudinal groove formed in said second removable part of the needle-guide device, thereby forming the bottom of the longitudinal groove of the base, the missing completing wall of the elongated guide hole, whose additional delimiting walls are formed by the bottom of the longitudinal groove in said second part of the needle-guide device, the side walls of said groove and the extensions of said side walls of the groove in said second part of the needle-guide device.

56. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 55, characterized in that, alternatively, instead of two extensions of the side walls of the longitudinal grooves in the second part of the needle-guide device, the second part of the needle-guide device may be arranged to have a single extension of one of the two side walls of the longitudinal groove, whereas the other extension may be provided on the base part, as an extension of the opposite side wall of the longitudinal groove in the base part of the needle-guide device, whereby each of the two parts of the needle-guide device forms two of the opposite walls of the elongated guide hole.

57. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 55, characterized in that the arrangement of the extensions of the side walls of the grooves in the two parts of the needle-guide device is alternate and complementary over the length of the two extensions in the

longitudinal direction of the grooves, either on one side and along the two opposite sides.

58. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that it has means for centering and partially interlocking the two parts of the needle-guide device.

59. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 19, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have removable mutually locking means.

60. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 59, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have mutually clamping screw threaded means.

61. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 60, characterized in that the mutually clamping screw threaded means of the two parts of the needle-guide device have means for engaging said two parts of the needle-guide device in an non-separable condition, and in a incompletely clamped condition.

62. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have mutual abutment surfaces which are tangent or secant to the elongated guide hole for guiding the needle, whereas said elongated guide hole is obtained by a combination of grooves which are formed either integrally on one of the mutual abutment surfaces of one of the two parts of the needle-guide device or partly on one and partly on the other of the two abutment surfaces of both parts of the needle-guide device.

63. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that the separation plane between the two parts of the needle-guide device is parallel to the axis of the elongated guide hole and secant or substantially tangent to the hole.

64. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that said elongated guide hole has a section which corresponds to the outer section of the needle, with the wall of the elongated guide hole adhering to the whole needle surface.

65. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that said elongated guide hole has polygonal sections, particularly square or rectangular sections, said square or rectangular sections having such a size as to be able to inscribe therein the cylindrical or elliptical or oval section of the needle and generating needle-guiding surfaces tangent to the outer surface of the needle.

66. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that the needle-guide device is composed of at least two removable parts, at least one base part and at least one second part, which two parts are separated from each other by a separation surface

whose cross section is a broken rectangular curve, and forms a succession of alternate and parallel complementary engageable ribs, there being provided, in the opposite mutual abutment surfaces of the ribs of one or both of the two parts of the needle-guide device grooves having such a size and shape as to form together said elongated guide hole.

67. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 66, characterized in that the broken rectangular line-shaped separation surface between said two parts of the needle-guide has constant or variable widths to generate guiding holes aligned on one or more planes and with different relative positions.

68. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that the needle-guide device may be divided in such a manner as to consist of more than two parts, for instance three parts, shaped in such a manner as to form complementary parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole.

69. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that it is composed of a base for connection to an ultrasound probe, which has an abutment or support surface for the second part of the needle-guide device, which second part has in turn at least one longitudinal groove whose size corresponds to the needle size, and forms the side walls and a wall transverse thereto for delimiting the needle-guiding hole, whereas its support surface on the base of the needle-guide device forms the missing wall of the elongated guide hole, when the two parts of the needle-guide device are connected.

70. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 62, characterized in that the two mutual abutment surfaces of the two parts of the needle-guide device have each a groove whose width corresponds to the width of the needle and a partial depth relative to the corresponding dimension of the needle, the two grooves being coincident and completing mutually when the two parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming the elongated guide hole for guiding the needle.

71. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 66, characterized in that the base part of the needle-guide device has at least a longitudinal groove in the surface abutting against the second removable part of the needle-guide device, for engagement of longitudinally continuous or discontinuous extensions of the side walls of a longitudinal groove formed in said second removable part of the needle-guide device, thereby forming the bottom of the longitudinal groove of the base, the missing completing wall of the elongated guide hole, whose

additional delimiting walls are formed by the bottom of the longitudinal groove in said second part of the needle-guide device, the side walls of said groove and the extensions of said side walls of the groove in said second part of the needle-guide device.

72. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 71, characterized in that, alternatively, instead of two extensions of the side walls of the longitudinal grooves in the second part of the needle-guide device, the second part of the needle-guide device may be arranged to have a single extension of one of the two side walls of the longitudinal groove, whereas the other extension may be provided on the base part, as an extension of the opposite side wall of the longitudinal groove in the base part of the needle-guide device, whereby each of the two parts of the needle-guide device forms two of the opposite walls of the elongated guide hole.

73. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 71, characterized in that the arrangement of the extensions of the side walls of the grooves in the two parts of the needle-guide device is alternate and complementary over the length of the two extensions in the longitudinal direction of the grooves, either on one side and along the two opposite sides.

74. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that it has means for centering and partially interlocking the two parts of the needle-guide device.

75. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 38, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have removable mutually locking means.

76. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 75, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have mutually clamping screw threaded means.

77. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 76, characterized in that the mutually clamping screw threaded means of the two parts of the needle-guide device have means for engaging said two parts of the needle-guide device in an non-separable condition, and in a incompletely clamped condition.

78. (Withdrawn) The combination, particularly for ultrasound probes, or the like, comprising a base body having means for connection to the probe and at least one elongated guide hole for receiving a needle-like surgical tool, characterized in that it has a plurality of elongated guide holes for guiding a plurality of surgical tools arranged with their axes coincident with a single plane or having axes arranged on more than one plane, particularly having hole axes arranged at the vertices of ideal polygonal elements, such as triangles, quadrilaterals, or the like, or in any other different mutual arrangement.

79. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 78, comprising a base body having means for connection to the probe and at least one elongated guide hole for an elongated, rodlike diagnostic or surgical tool, characterized in that said needle-guide device is made of at least two removably connectable parts, which are shaped in such a manner that each of them forms complementary parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole for a needle, which peripheral wall parts complete each other when said two parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming said elongated guide hole for guiding the needle with a 360 degree covering delimiting wall.

80. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 78, characterized in that said needle-guide device is comprised of a base part to be secured, for instance, to an ultrasound probe and of a removable part, a separation plane or surface being provided between the at least two parts, which is parallel to the axis of the corresponding elongated guide hole, and is secant or at least tangent to the corresponding hole, and combinations of grooves and walls in the mutual abutment surfaces of said two parts which, by their mutual engagement, form the complementary parts of the surfaces delimiting the two, three or more holes of the needle-guide device, so that, by separating said at least two parts, all the elongated guide holes are longitudinally open on at least one portion of a side.

81. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 78, characterized in that it includes three elongated guide holes and wherein the needle-guide device is divided into a base and a second part to be removably fastened to the base, the base of the needle-guide device having a surface whereby it abuts against the second part of the needle-guide device, wherein a first groove is provided in a median position, in turn having a second groove in its bottom wall, which is designed to form two longitudinal side walls and a longitudinal bottom wall of one of the elongated guide holes for one of the needles, whereas the second part of the needle-guide device has, on the surface turned toward the abutment surface of the base part, a longitudinal median rib which coincides with the longitudinal median groove in the base part and forms the missing delimiting surface of the corresponding elongated guide hole, thereby completing the delimiting surfaces formed by the second groove, whereas, in the surfaces of the second part of the needle-guide device, on the two sides of the longitudinal median rib, longitudinal grooves are provided which form, with the bands of the abutment surface of the base on both sides of the first groove, the delimiting surfaces of the two additional elongated guide holes.

82. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 81, characterized in that the grooves which form a portion of the side walls and a wall transverse thereto for delimiting the elongated guide hole are provided partially in both opposite mutual abutment surfaces of the two parts of the needle-guide device.

83. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 81, characterized in that the needle-guide device has a slender or tapering front head, particularly having rounded edges, especially being wedge-shaped.

84. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 78, characterized in that the whole needle-guide device has a shape tapering toward the front end, especially a wedge shape.

85. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 84, characterized in that at least one elongated guide hole for guiding at least one needle is inclined in a manner corresponding to the wedge-shaped profile of the needle-guide device.

86. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 83, characterized in that said front head is also perforated and is arranged to be a single piece, and preferably made of one piece with the base part of the needle-guide device.

87. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 83, characterized in that the front head, which is integral with said base and the second part of the needle-guide device have complementary mutually engaging means.

88. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 83, characterized in that the through hole in said head part is widened on at least one side or for a portion of its delimiting surface inside the head, the second part of the needle-guide device having a wall extension at its end which may be axially engaged in the through hole of the front head, and which is coincident with said widened portion and complementary thereto so as to form and/or complete the delimiting wall of the through elongated guide hole, at least on a few sides, even at the front head of the needle-guide device.

89. (Withdrawn) A needle-guide as claimed in claim 88, characterized in that the second part of the needle-guide device has said extensions on two opposite sides and in the form of front extension wings of the two side walls of the groove provided in said second part of the needle-guide device, whereas the front head of the needle-guide device has complementary widened portions in the corresponding walls of the through hole.

90. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 83, characterized in that an

extension wing is also provided from the bottom wall of the groove of the second part of the needle-guide device, the front head of the needle-guide device being arranged to be accordingly widened even at said extension wing of the bottom side of the groove of the second part of the needle-guide device.

91. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 83, characterized in that the extension wings of the side and/or bottom walls of the groove in the second part of the needle-guide device are thinner than the wall of the second part of the needle-guide device and than the head of the needle-guide device, whereby an abutment step is formed between the front end of the second part of the needle-guide device and the facing rear end side of the front head.

92. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 86, characterized in that the front head of the needle-guide device, which is integral with the base part of the needle-guide device, has a through aperture which communicates with the elongated guide hole provided therein at at least one of the sides of said head, preferably at one of the two transverse sides, not coinciding with the extension wings of the second part of the needle-guide device and particularly at the side of the base part of the needle-guide device which is opposite the second part of the needle-guide device and meant to adhere against or turned toward the probe, whereas in the front head, the needle is only substantially guided on three sides and through less than 360° at least in coincidence with the through aperture.

93. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 92, characterized in that the front head has a steeper tapering inclination in the portion projecting beyond the aperture on one of the sides, and that the needle projection aperture is provided in the inclined front side, and is slot-shaped due to the inclination of the front end of the head.

94. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 83, characterized in that the length of the front head wherein each needle is guided only on a few sides is relatively small as compared with the length of the rest of the needle-guide device in which the elongated guide hole has a continuous delimiting surface.

95. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 94, characterized in that the front head has needle guiding surfaces covering less than 360° and wherein the missing part of the guiding wall is alternated in different positions through successive sectors of the head.

96. (Withdrawn) The combination as claimed in claim 93, characterized in that, at the more tapered front end, the elongated guide hole delimiting walls are continuous and made of

one piece, as well as directly accessible from the aperture wherefrom a needle projects.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney with any questions that may arise.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 

Scott J. Stevens, Reg. No. 79,446
Woodard, Emhardt, Moriarty, Mcnett & Henry LLP
3700 Bank One Center Tower
111 Monument Circle
Indianapolis, IN 46204-5137
Phone (317) 713-4947
Fax (317) 637-7561